

Lesson 1 – Extracts from Hammurabi’s Code (c. 1750 BC)

Law 15. If anyone takes a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.

Law 16. If anyone receives into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the *major domus* [the man who ran the king’s household], the master of the house shall be put to death.

Law 17. If anyone finds runaway male or female slaves in the open country and brings them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.

Law 18. If the slave will not give the name of the master, the finder shall bring him to the palace; a further investigation must follow, and the slave shall be returned to his master.

Law 19. If anyone hides a runaway slave in his house, and the slave is caught there, the man hiding the slave shall be put to death.

Law 20. If a runaway slave that the slave-catcher caught escapes from him, then the slave-catcher shall swear to the owners of the slave that it was not his fault, and he shall be free of all blame.

Law 118. If an owner gives a male or female slave away for forced labour, and the merchant sublease them, or sell them for money, no objection can be raised.

Questions

1. Do any of the law codes suggest that runaway slaves were a problem? Explain.
2. Reading between the lines, do you think slaves had good lives in Babylon?
3. Why might a Babylonian hide a runaway slave in his house?

Lesson 1 – Slavery in the Old Testament

Source One – “As for your male and female [foreign] slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn [visit] with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land, and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them...”
Leviticus

Source Two – ““If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore, I command you this today.” *Deuteronomy*

Source Three – “If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: he shall be with you as a hired worker and as a sojourner [temporary resident]. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.¹ Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers.” *Leviticus*

Source Four – If a thief is caught stealing “He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.” *Exodus*

Questions

- 1) What are the four forms of slavery under the ancient Hebrews?
- 2) Was slavery for Hebrews different than for foreigners?

Lesson 2 – Slavery in Ancient Sparta

Source One – the helots were invited by a proclamation to pick out those of their number who claimed to have most distinguished themselves against the enemy, in order that they might receive their freedom; the object being to test them, as it was thought that the first to claim their freedom would be the highest spirited and the most able to rebel. as many as two thousand were selected accordingly, who crowned themselves and went round the temples, rejoicing in their new freedom. The Spartans, however, soon afterwards did away with them, and no one ever knew how each of them perished.

- The ancient historian Thucydides

¹ The Jubilee Year was held every fifty years. On that day all Jews who were held as bonded labourers had to be freed.

Source Two – they [the Spartans] assign to the helots every shameful task leading to disgrace. for they ordained that each one of them must wear a dog-skin cap and wrap himself in [animal] skins and receive a stipulated number of beatings every year regardless of any wrongdoing, so that they would never forget they were slaves.

- The ancient historian Myron of Priene

Source Three - Oftentimes, too, they crossed the fields where Helots were working and slew the sturdiest and best of them. So, too, Thucydides, in his history of the Peloponnesian war, tells us that the Helots who had been judged by the Spartans to be superior in bravery, set wreaths upon their heads in token of their emancipation, and visited the temples of the gods in procession, but a little while afterwards all disappeared, more than two-thousand of them, in such a way that no man was able to say, either then or afterwards, how they came by their deaths.

- The ancient historian Plutarch

Source Four - It is confessed, on all hands, that the Spartans dealt with the Helots very harshly; for it was a common thing to force them to drink [wine] to excess, and to lead them in that condition into their public halls, that the children might see what a sight a drunken man is; they made them to dance low dances, and sing ridiculous songs, forbidding them expressly to mix with Spartans who were their masters.

- The ancient historian Plutarch

Questions

- 1) Using the above sources, explain the condition of the helots.
- 2) Why do you think the Spartans treated their slaves so poorly?
- 3) Why do you think the Spartans singled out the best slaves for death?

Lesson 2 - Spartacus

Read the mini biography on the slave Spartacus that can be found here:

[Spartacus the Gladiator Biography - Life of Slave Revolt Leader](#)

Questions

- 1) Why do you think Spartacus escaped from the gladiator school?
- 2) Spartacus' group of slaves grew from a few dozen to over 70,000. What does this tell us about slavery in the Roman Empire?

3) What happened to the slaves who were not killed in battle?

Lesson 3 – Slavery in the Middle Ages

Source One

Nor did the practice of slavery cease once the Welsh had been conquered, for war was constant in Anglo-Saxon England, and the various Anglo-Saxon tribes were not against enslaving each other. An example of the fate of those enslaved through tribal wars is given in Bede's account of the Mercian nobleman Imma, who was found by the Northumbrians lying on the battlefield after a fight between them and the Mercians in 679. Imma pretended to be a poor peasant who was bringing supplies for the warriors. He later admitted his noble status. His captor, who had lost family in the battle, felt he deserved to be killed, but nevertheless spared him and instead sold him to a Frisian [Dutchman] in London, from whom Imma was able to buy his freedom. The story suggests that among the Anglo-Saxons the warriors on the losing side were likely to be killed but those who were not [e.g., peasant helpers] were enslaved.

- Historian David Pelteret writing in 1981. Nota bene, the language has been simplified from the original quotation.

Source Two

It is reported that some merchants, having just arrived at Rome on a certain day exposed many things for sale in the slave boys marketplace; an abundance of slaves from England were on sale. [The monk] Gregory himself went with the rest, and among other things some boys were set to sale, their bodies white, their countenances beautiful, and their hair very fine. Having viewed them he asked, as is said, from what country or nation they were brought, and was told, from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants were of such personal appearance.

- Written by the historian Bede in the 600s

Source Three

The Vikings are well attested [known] in Europe. Their raids took them all over the continent, including its eastern and southern extremities. Slaves of Slavic origin [Russians, Poles, etc.], for instance, were regularly used by them as a major trading item with Islamic merchants in Eastern Europe...According to the Viking sagas, Ireland itself was a source of slaves for Vikings, as was Scotland. And once the Vikings settled Ireland they used it to make further raids on Britain. Thus in 871 Olaf the White and Ivar the Boneless returned to Dublin with a great multitude of English, Welsh and Scots.

- Historian David Pelteret writing in 1981

Source Four

Icelandic genetic research reveals the fate of the thousands of Irish women, who were enslaved by the Vikings and brought overseas to colonize Iceland. Mostly women were taken from Ireland and Scotland by the Nordic warriors some 1,000 years ago and settled in Iceland. Now, DNA mapping has now revealed that these Irish women did not play as much of an influence in the genetic make-up of modern-day Iceland as the Vikings who brought them there.

Irish Central News, 2018

Questions

- 1) Source one describes one way the English tribes sometimes enslaved each other. Explain this way.
- 2) Source two describes a Roman marketplace after the collapse of the Roman Empire. What does it tell us about slavery in Anglo-Saxon England?
- 3) What does source three tell us about the Viking's role in slavery during the Middle Ages?
- 4) Looking at source four, how does DNA research help us to discover new history?

Lesson 4 - Slavery in the Muslim World

Source One

The poor children of the black countries seem to meet death here [the Sahara Desert], at the last stage of a long, hopeless and painful journey. The long journey accomplished with insufficient food and scarce water, the contrast between the rich natural resources and the humid atmosphere of their homeland and the dry and anaemic air of the desert, the fatigue and the privations imposed by their masters and by the circumstances in which they find themselves, all this has gradually ruined their young strengths. The memory of their homeland that has disappeared along the way, their fear of an unknown future, the endless journey under the blows, hunger, thirst and deadly exhaustion have paralyzed their last faculties of resistance. If the poor creatures lack strength to get up and walk again, they are simply abandoned, and their minds slowly fade under the destructive effect of the rays of the sun, hunger and thirst.

- German Explorer Gustav Nachtigal describing slaves travelling through the Sahara trade route in the 1800s

Source Two

I have been asked about slaves from the land of Abyssinia [Ethiopia] who profess monotheism [Ethiopians were Christians] and accept the rules of the Holy Law: is it legal or not to buy and sell them? If their conversion to Islam comes after the establishment of a property right [on these slaves], then Islam does not demand liberation, because slavery was caused by unbelief. The state of servitude persists after the disappearance of unbelief because of its existence in the past.

- Algerian Arab theologian Ahmed al-Wancharisi (1430/1431-1508) offered legal and religious recommendations

Source Three

The Arab slave trade was characterized by appalling violence, castration, and rape. The men were systematically castrated to prevent them from reproducing and becoming a stock. This inhumane practice resulted in a high death rate: six out of 10 people who were mutilated died from their wounds in castration centres. The Arab slave trade also targeted African women and girls, who were captured and deported for use [in harems] ...When they arrived at destinations, the [male] captives were sold in the slave markets of Cairo, Baghdad, Istanbul, Mecca, and other centres. These slaves played various roles in the economy of the Muslim world. They were used as servants, harem keepers, labourers in fields, mines, and hydraulic yards and as cannon fodder in armies.

David Gakunzi, "The Arab-Muslim Slave Trade: Lifting the Taboo," *Jewish Political Studies Review*

Questions

- 1) Using the source one and three, explain the conditions that African slaves suffered under.
- 2) How was slavery justified in source two?
- 3) According to source two, could Christians convert to Islam to avoid slavery?
- 4) What jobs did slaves have in the Muslim world?

Lesson 4 – Slavery in the Muslim World

The Tribute of Children - 1493

INTRODUCTION: *About a century before the capture of Istanbul, when Amurath I was on the [Ottoman] throne, his advisor suggested to him that he had a right not only to one-fifth of the spoils of battle, but also to one-fifth of the captives. "Let officers be stationed at Gallipoli," he said, "and as the Christians pass by, let them choose the fairest and strongest*

of the Christian boys to become your soldiers." Thus, was formed the famous corps of the Janissaries. To keep to corps numbers up, the agents of the sultan went once in four years to all the Christian villages under Turkish control. Every boy between six and nine years of age must be brought before them, and the agents carried away one-fifth of the number, carefully selecting the strongest and most intelligent.

THE advice of the vizier was followed; the law was proclaimed; many thousands of the European captives were educated in the Muslim religion and arms, and the new militia was consecrated and named by a celebrated dervish. Standing in the front of their ranks, he stretched the sleeve of his gown over the head of the foremost soldier, and his blessing was delivered in the following words "Let them be called Janissaries ["new soldiers"]; may their countenances be ever bright; their hand victorious; their swords keen; may their spear always hang over the heads of their enemies; and, wheresoever they go, may they return with a white face." White and black face are common and proverbial expressions of praise and reproach in the Turkish language. Such was the origin of these haughty troops, the terror of the nations.

They are kept up by continual additions from the sultan's share of the captives, and by recruits, raised every five years, from the children of the Christian subjects. Small parties of soldiers, each under a leader, and each provided with a particular quota of slaves, go from place to place. Wherever they come, the village leader assembled the inhabitants with their sons. The leader of the soldiers has the right to take away all the youth who are distinguished by beauty or strength, activity or talent, above the age of seven. He carries them to the court of the grand seignior, a tithe, as it is, of the subjects. The captives taken in war by the pashas, and presented by them to the sultan, include Poles, Bohemians, Russians, Italians, and Germans.

These recruits are divided into two classes. Those who compose the one, are sent to Anatolia, where they are trained to agricultural labour, and instructed in the Muslim faith; or they are retained about the seraglio [palace], where they carry wood and water, and are employed in the gardens, in the boats, or upon the public buildings, always under the direction of an overseer, who with a stick compels them to work. The others, in whom traces of a higher character are discernible, are placed in one of the four seraglios of Adrianople or Galata, or the old or new one at Constantinople... Teachers come every morning, who remain with them until evening, and teach them to read and write. Those who have performed hard labour are made Janissaries...

Both classes are kept under a strict discipline. The former especially are accustomed to lack of food, drink, and comfortable clothing and to hard labour. They are exercised in shooting with the bow and harquebus [gun] by day, and spend the night in a long, lighted hall, with an overseer, who walks up and down, and permits no one to stir. When they are received into the corps of the Janissaries, they are placed in cloister-like barracks...Here not only the younger continue to obey the elders in silence and submission, but all are governed with such strictness that no one is permitted to spend the night abroad, and whoever is punished is compelled to kiss the hand of him who inflicts the punishment.

Task

Write a paragraph describing the process of becoming a Janissary.

Lesson 5 – The Life of Olaudah Equiano

Read the extracts below on Olaudah's life and add the key information to your table.

Source	Key Information
1. Life in Africa before Capture	
2. Capture and Slavery in Africa	
3. Handover to Europeans	
4. The Middle Passage	
5. Arrival and Auctioning	
6. Life as a slave	

1. Life in Africa before Capture

Olaudah Equiano was born in 1745 in what is now Nigeria. He lived in a small village called Essaka. Before being captured Olaudah had not heard of, or seen, a European or the sea. His father was an Elder of the village and was held in high esteem. Elders were similar to judges in that they decided disputes and punished crimes.

Dance and music were an important part of life in Olaudah's village. All great occasions were celebrated with dancing, songs and music. These dances were divided into 4 groups, the first being the married men, then the married women would dance, then unmarried men and finally unmarried women.

The land was fertile and produced abundant crops.

There were often battles with other tribes. The desire to capture slaves seems to have been one motive for fighting at times:

This common [farming field] is often the theatre of war; and therefore when our people go out to till their land, they not only go in a body, but generally take their arms with them for fear of a surprise... From what I can recollect of these battles, they appear to have been irruptions of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. ... We have fire-arms, bows and arrows, broad two-edged swords and javelins: we have shields also which cover a man from head to foot. All are taught the use of these weapons; even our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men. Our whole district is a kind of militia: on a certain signal given, such as the firing of a gun at night, they all rise in arms and rush upon their enemy...I was once a witness to a battle in our common. We had been all at work in it one day as usual, when our people were suddenly attacked. I climbed a tree at some distance, from which I beheld the fight. There were many women as well as men on both sides; among others my mother was there, and armed with a broad sword. After fighting for a considerable time with great fury, and after many had been killed our people obtained the victory, and took their enemy's Chief prisoner. He was carried off in great triumph, and, though he offered a large ransom for his life, he was put to death. A virgin of note among our enemies had been slain in the battle, and her arm was exposed in our market-place, where our trophies were always exhibited. The spoils were divided according to the merit of the warriors. Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed we kept as slaves: but

how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their masters; their food, clothing and lodging were nearly the same as theirs, (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free-born); and there was scarce any other difference between them, than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which, as such, he exercises over every part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them as their own property, and for their own use.

Olaudah's home life was privileged and comfortable. His father had many slaves. Olaudah had a large family consisting of seven children: six boys and one girl. Being the youngest son, Olaudah was his mothers' favourite and had considerable attention lavished on him.

2. Capture and Slavery in Africa

African raiders from another tribe captured Olaudah at the age of eleven along with his sister. The villagers were aware of the threat posed by slavers and children were posted as lookouts whilst the adults were out working. Olaudah and his sister were grabbed and taken before they had time to cry out. Their hands were tied, and they were gagged so they could not make a noise. They were taken from their village and travelled for several days before being separated. Olaudah was taken and sold to his new master, a Chieftain with two wives who worked as a goldsmith. Although a long way from home, Olaudah found that the same language was spoken, and he was treated kindly. His main employment was working the bellows of the forge where the goldsmith made gold jewellery. Olaudah was given a reasonable amount of freedom and tried to gauge where he was by noting the position of the sun. He planned to escape. One day, however, he got into trouble by killing a chicken with a carelessly thrown stone. He was convinced he would be flogged so ran away and hid nearby. He stayed hidden all day and was not found despite extensive searching. However, he overheard the searchers discussing his chances of escape and he discovered that his homeland was a great distance away and he would be very unlikely to reach it. On hearing that he returned to his master who did not beat him after all.

He was then sold again and travelled a considerable distance with his new owners. Over this time, he picked up several new languages so he must have travelled for some time. There was a brief reunion with his sister, but they were soon separated a second time. Once again Olaudah was sold on and travelled for some time until he reached the town of Tinmah. This he describes as being very beautiful and very rich with a large central pond where people washed. The area was rich in sugar cane and cocoa nuts. Olaudah was sold for 172 shells to a merchant. In turn the merchant sold him to a wealthy widow with a son of about his own age. He stayed here for about 2 months and was treated as one of the family, in fact so well

treated that he started to forget he was a slave. He spent time with the widow's son playing with bows and arrows. Unfortunately, this did not last long.

Olaudah was sold again and taken away by another trader. He had a very long journey and found himself among people whose habits and customs were very different. They were uncircumcised and did not wash their hands before eating. They cooked in iron pots and had European cutlasses and cross bows. He passed through large tobacco plantations, further evidence of European influence. The people here made no sacrifices and ornamented themselves by cutting their faces and filing their teeth to sharp points. Olaudah travelled by canoe, something he had not done before. On reaching the coast he was boarded onto a slave ship. For someone who had not even seen the sea before this must have been a terrifying experience. It was 7 months since he had first been captured.

3. Handover to Europeans

Olaudah was carried aboard the ship and found many black people chained together. He had never even seen the sea before so being taken aboard a ship must have been a terrifying experience. There was also a large copper pot on a furnace. He was convinced that he was to be boiled and eaten. It was the first time he had seen Europeans and found their white complexion and long hair alarming and thought they were devils. He fainted on deck and was given spirits to revive him.

He was then taken below decks and was so overcome by the stench that he could not eat anything when offered food. He was flogged for not eating and despite his terror of the water he would have attempted to jump in to escape. The crew watched all the slaves very closely when they weren't chained below decks and any that tried to escape by jumping overboard were severely cut. Any slaves not eating were flogged. Olaudah found some other slaves that spoke the same language, and they informed him that they were to be transported to the white men's country to work.

The European slavers were brutal and cruel and not only to the slaves. Seamen were flogged, often to death, and their bodies thrown overboard. Slaves were flogged for not eating as this made them unlikely to survive the journey.

The ship remained in harbour in Africa until its cargo was full and complete. So, some slaves would have been on board for some time before the ship even started its long journey. Olaudah was astonished by the ship and its masts, rigging and sails. He had never seen anything like it before and thought the ship was propelled by magic.

Here Equiano describes the conditions onboard the slave ship:

“I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and

low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across I think the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before; and although, not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself...The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable."

4. The Middle Passage

When all to cargo was loaded and the ship was ready to sail all the slaves were taken below decks. Some slaves could have been aboard sometime if they were loaded onto the ship early on. The slaves were chained together in the hold. It was very overcrowded, and each man had only about 18 inches in which to sit. There were tubs at one end to serve as toilets, but they were rarely emptied and small children often fell in and drowned. The heat and the stench of vomit, urine and faeces was so bad that many died or fainted due to lack of air.

Some were brought up on deck to be revived. Due to his poor health and youth Olaudah was not chained and allowed on deck most of the time and was not kept in irons as most of the slaves were.

On one occasion some fish were landed by the sailors and having eaten their fill the slaves expected to be given the rest. The uneaten fish were simply thrown overboard despite the pleas of the slaves. Any slaves that tried to take any of the uneaten fish unobserved were flogged.

On another occasion two slaves managed to jump overboard preferring to drown than stay on the slave ship any longer. Another one followed but was rescued. He was then flogged unmercifully for attempting to die rather than remain a slave. During the voyage many died from disease and lack of fresh air.

This is Equiano's personal account:

Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful, and heighten my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites. One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings. One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery.

Olaudah was amazed by the sight of flying fish that sometimes landed on deck. He also was fascinated by the quadrant, an instrument used by the sailors to navigate.

Eventually they reached Bridgetown, Barbados where they were to be sold.

5. Arrival and Auctioning

Olaudah finally arrived in Barbados in the West Indies. They anchored in Bridgetown amongst many other ships of different kinds. Many planters and merchants came aboard the ship to examine its cargo. The slaves were put into groups to be examined by the buyers. They were made to jump and stick out their tongues. Then poked and prodded. The slaves thought they were to be bought and eaten and they became very agitated. Some slaves were brought aboard to explain to the others that they had been brought here to work, not to be eaten:

We did not know what to think of this; but as the vessel drew nearer, we plainly saw the harbour, and other ships of different kinds and sizes; and we soon anchored amongst them off Bridge Town. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages.

The slaves were taken ashore and penned like cattle in the merchant's yard. Oludah saw many things that astonished him; the houses were made of brick and more than one storey high; he had seen nothing like this before. He saw people on horseback and thought they had magical creatures, having never even seen horses before.

He remained in the merchant's yard for a few days and then it was time for the auction. The auction started with the beating of a drum signalling the buyers to rush into the yard to select which slaves they would like to buy. This was a very noisy and frightening experience for the slaves. They had no say in who bought them. Families were separated, parents lost children, husbands and wives were split up, probably never to see each other again.

Olaudah now was totally alone. All the other slaves he had befriended were sold and the women who had helped to look after him were all sent their different ways. Olaudah was not sold as he was weak and sickly so with some other slaves he was shipped off the North America. Here he was set to work on a plantation. There were no other slaves that he could talk to, and he became very miserable. He was also very shocked and afraid when he saw a woman slave who was cooking the dinner with a large iron contraption on her head. This was known as an iron muzzle and was used as a punishment for too much talking. The wearer could not eat or drink and could hardly speak.

6. Life as a slave

Olaudah did not stay in Barbados; he was taken to the British colony of Virginia where an owner of a large farm (plantation) bought him. He was too weak to work in the fields. Instead, he attended the plantation owner who was ill. He fanned him and fed him soup. He was amazed at the things he saw in the room where he was sitting. There was a clock which he took to be a very large watch hanging on the wall. He was surprised at the noise it made. He found the portraits hanging on the wall quite frightening, thinking they were looking at him. He thought they were some kind of magic and a way to keep white people alive once they had died. In this house Olaudah was called Jacob.

This situation did not last long. Olaudah was soon bought by a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, Michael Henry Pascal for thirty or forty pounds. Lieutenant Pascal had bought Olaudah as a present for some friends in England, so he was duly embarked onto another ship, this time a cargo ship bound for England. The cargo was, among other things, tobacco but not slaves, so Olaudah had a much more pleasant journey. The sailors were kind to him, and he had plenty to eat. He attempted to learn some English and was told he was going home. This, however, was not the case as he found when he arrived in England. He had been renamed again, this time Gustavus Vassa, although Olaudah said he would prefer to keep the name Jacob. Whilst at sea supplies had got very low and the sailors had jokingly said they would eat Olaudah. He had taken this seriously and became quite depressed, particularly when they caught a large shark and had only eaten a small part of its tail. During this voyage Olaudah became good friends with a white-American, Richard Baker. They remained great friends until Baker's death in 1759. Olaudah spent most of the three years at sea and was sold to a new master.

This is a recollection of being at sea:

Towards the last we had only one pound and a half of bread per week, and about the same quantity of meat, and one quart of water a-day. We spoke with only one vessel the whole time we were at sea, and but once we caught a few fishes. In our extremities the captain and people told me in jest they would kill and eat me; but I thought them in earnest, and was depressed

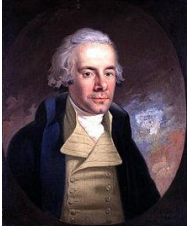
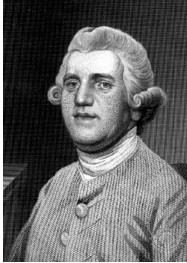
beyond measure, expecting every moment to be my last. While I was in this situation one evening they caught, with a good deal of trouble, a large shark, and got it on board. This gladdened my poor heart exceedingly, as I thought it would serve the people to eat instead of their eating me; but very soon, to my astonishment, they cut off a small part of the tail and tossed the rest over the side. This renewed my consternation; and I did not know what to think of these white people, though I very much feared they would kill and eat me. There was on board the ship a young lad who had never been at sea before, about four or five years older than myself: his name was Richard Baker. He was a native of America, had received an excellent education, and was of a most amiable temper. Soon after I went on board he shewed me a great deal of partiality and attention, and in return I grew extremely fond of him. We at length became inseparable; and, for the space of two years, he was of very great use to me and was my constant companion and instructor.

Equiano's full biography can be found here:

[The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African](#)

Lesson 6 – Key Abolitionists Table and Mini-Biographies

Read the mini-biographies and add key information to the table below.

Who they are	What they did	Who they are	What they did
 William Wilberforce (1759-1833)		 Granville Sharpe (1735-1813)	
 Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846)		 Josiah Wedgewood (1730-1795)	
 Olaudah Equiano (1745-97)			

Olaudah Equiano (1745-97)

Olaudah Equiano was a former enslaved African, seaman and merchant who wrote a book depicting the horrors of slavery and lobbied Parliament for its abolition. In his biography, he records he was born in what is now Nigeria, kidnapped and sold into slavery as a child. He then endured the middle passage on a slave ship bound for the New World. The book made him famous and furthered the abolitionist cause. It became a bestseller and was translated into many languages. The tens of thousands of people who read Equiano's book, or heard him speak, started to see slavery through the eyes of a former enslaved African. It was a very important book that made a vital contribution to the abolitionists' cause.



Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846)

Thomas Clarkson spent his long adult life working to abolish the Transatlantic Slave Trade and slavery itself. In an effort to gather hard facts about the Slave Trade, Thomas Clarkson visited many ports and went aboard the trading vessels. One of the first ships linked to slavery Clarkson visited was called *The Lively*. It was not a slave ship, but its cargo had a powerful impact upon Clarkson. The ship was full of beautiful and exotic goods- carved ivory and woven cloth, along with produce such as beeswax, palm oil and peppers. Clarkson could see the craftsmanship and skill that would have been required to produce many of the items. The idea that their creators could be enslaved was horrifying. Clarkson bought samples from the ship and started a collection that he added to over the years.



Thomas Clarkson noticed how pictures and artefacts were able to influence public opinion, more than mere words alone and quickly realised that the contents of the chest might reinforce the message of his anti-slavery lectures. He used the contents to demonstrate the skill of Africans and the possibilities that existed for an alternative humane trading system. The 'box' became an important part of his public meetings, providing an early example of a visual aid.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833)

William Wilberforce was a British politician and moral reformer who became the leading parliamentary voice of the abolitionist movement. He entered Parliament in 1780, and after a profound evangelical conversion in 1785, dedicated his life to social causes, including the fight against the transatlantic slave trade.



In 1787, Wilberforce joined forces with abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp and began introducing bills to end the slave trade. Despite fierce resistance, he persisted for two decades, delivering powerful speeches and rallying support across political and religious lines. His efforts culminated in the passage of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, which outlawed British involvement in the trade.

Recognizing that slavery itself continued to thrive in British colonies, Wilberforce spent his later years campaigning for full emancipation. He supported the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823 and worked closely with younger reformers like Thomas Fowell Buxton. In 1833, just days after learning that Parliament had passed the Slavery Abolition Act, Wilberforce died—his life's mission fulfilled.

Granville Sharp

As Sharp left his house one day in 1765 he noticed a black man, Jonathan Strong, queuing for free medical help. His head was badly swollen; he was nearly blind and couldn't walk. This man was a slave who had been beaten by his owner and had therefore run away. Strong recovered and began working in the city. Two years later, his owner spotted him, caught him and tried to sell him. Granville Sharp defended Strong on the grounds he could not be forced to leave Britain and so began his interest in slavery. He defended many black people on these grounds and won. Granville Sharp did not manage to get slavery or the slave trade abolished, but he had started the campaign against slavery. For instance, he helped establish the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. Sharp was also involved in other legal cases, such as the slave ship *Zong*. Cases such as this help to raise public awareness of the horrors of slavery and started to turn public opinion against the slave trade.



Josiah Wedgwood

Josiah Wedgwood was an English potter and industrialist. Because he was a respected businessman, people listened to his views, and he was able to convince friends and colleagues of the evils of the slave trade. He admired the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade Emblem which read: "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" He had the design reproduced in a porcelain cameo. He donated hundreds of these to the Society for distribution. It became the most famous image of the campaign. The emblem was worn by fashionable ladies as a brooch or hair piece and, as Thomas Clarkson said, was the first time that "fashion, which usually confines itself to worthless things, was seen ... promoting the cause of justice, humanity and freedom."



Bonus Reading – Toussaint L'Ouverture

Toussaint L'Ouverture became a key leader in the Haitian Revolution, the largest and most successful slave uprising in history. The revolt began in 1791, when enslaved people in the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up against brutal plantation conditions.

L'Ouverture joined the fight soon after and helped turn the rebellion into a powerful movement for freedom. He built a strong army, made smart alliances, and worked to end slavery across the island. In 1794, France officially abolished slavery, and L'Ouverture became governor of the colony. Although he was later captured by the French and died in prison, his leadership inspired others to keep fighting. In 1804, Haiti became the first free Black republic. The revolution showed enslaved people across the Caribbean that freedom was possible—and made slave owners fear more uprisings.



Lesson 7: Communist Slave Labour – The Gulag

Source 1 – “The root destruction of religion in the country, which throughout the twenties and thirties was one of the most important goals of the GPU-NKVD [communist secret police], could be realized only by mass arrests of Orthodox [Christian] believers. Monks and nuns, whose black habits [veils] had been a distinctive feature of Old Russian life, were intensively rounded up on every hand, placed under arrest, and sent into exile. They arrested and sentenced active laymen. The circles kept getting bigger, as they raked in ordinary believers as well, old people and particularly women, who were the most stubborn believers of all and who, for many long years to come, would be called 'nuns' in transit prisons and in camps.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - *The Gulag Archipelago*

Source 2 – “My life is over, a little early to be sure; but there's nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die - now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - *The Gulag Archipelago*

Source 3 – “But in every case, out of all the cells you've been in, your first cell is a very special one, the place where you first encountered others like yourself, doomed to the same fate. All your life you will remember it with an emotion that you otherwise experience only in remembering your first love. And those people, who shared with you the floor and air of that stone cubicle during those days when you rethought your entire life, will from time to time be recollected by you as members of your own family.

Yes, in those days they were your only family.

What you experience in your first interrogation cell parallels nothing in your entire previous life or your whole subsequent life”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - *The Gulag Archipelago*

Source 4 – “No food or tools were left for them. The roads were impassable, and there was no way through to the world outside, except for two brushwood paths. . . Machine-gunners manned barriers on both paths and let no one through from the death camp. They started dying like flies. Desperate people came out to the barriers begging to be let through and were shot on the spot...They died off – every one of them...There's no other way to build the New Society.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - *The Gulag Archipelago*

Source 5 – “The region contained Kolyma, the most deadly camps in the Gulag and one of the coldest inhabited places on earth. To reach Kolyma prisoners had to undertake a journey of up to three months, crossing the entire length of Russia before sailing northwards by ship from Vladivostok. Of 16,000 prisoners sent to establish the camps in Kolyma, over one-third died during the journey. Half of those who survived the journey didn’t make it past their first winter.

Kolyma was fed with tens of thousands of prisoners every year. The slave ships crossed the Sea of Okhotsk, each with up to twelve thousand people on board. One such ship, the SS *Dzhurma*, became trapped in pack ice in 1933 for nine months. All 12,000 prisoners on board froze to death. Another slave ship, the SS Indigirka, sank in 1939 with thousands trapped inside.

Kolyma’s slaves built the port city of Magadan, the road inland, and the mines in which they were worked to death. The number of dead is estimated at up to two million. At its height Kolyma was producing one-third of the world’s gold. Kolyma also had camps to mine uranium at Butugychag where high levels of radioactivity killed many of its workers.”

“The Soviet Gulag – Stalin’s Slave Camps”

Questions

- 1) Examine source one. Why were these people sent to the camps?
- 2) Examine sources two, three and four. Explain the conditions in the gulag?
- 3) Examine source five. Explain why the Kolyma camps were so terrible.

Lesson 8 – Slavery Essay Project



As you know, slavery has, unfortunately, always been a part of history. You will research and write an essay on modern slavery in the African country of Mauritania.

You **should** write about the following things:

- Why does slavery still exist in Mauritania today?
- Who are the slaves?
- Who are the slave owners?
- How do slaves become slaves?
- What conditions do the slaves live under? What type of work do they do?
- What efforts are being made to abolish slavery in Mauritania?

There is a writing frame on the reverse to help you with the essay.

Further Things to Consider

You must write your essay in **your own words**. You must not copy information directly from books or the internet or use AI. This is plagiarism, which is a form of cheating. You may, however, use direct quotations (sparingly).

You may add maps, diagrams and pictures to your essay; but the essay should be between 400 to 600 words.

Your essay should be organised into paragraphs and include both an introduction and a conclusion.



Resources

[10 Shocking Facts About Slavery In Mauritania - The Borgen Project](#)

[The unspeakable truth about slavery in Mauritania | Global development | The Guardian](#)

[The State of Slavery in Mauritania | Council on Foreign Relations \(cfr.org\)](#)

[Descent-based slavery in Mauritania - Anti-Slavery International \(antislavery.org\)](#)

[The modern-day child slaves of Mauritania \(alaraby.co.uk\)](#)

[Mauritania: Slavery's last stronghold - YouTube](#)

Writing Frame

You can use the introduction below.

Slavery has existed in every society in history. Although it has been abolished in the whole world, slavery still exists in the African country of Mauritania. This essay will explore why slavery still exists there; who the slaves and masters are; how someone becomes a slave in this benighted country; what conditions slaves live under; and finally what efforts some people are taking to abolish slavery in Mauritania.

Paragraph One – Why slavery exists in Mauritania.

Paragraph Two – Who are the slaves and masters?

Paragraph Three – How does one become a slave? What are their living conditions? What kind of work do they do?

Paragraph Four – What are people doing to get slavery abolished there?

Conclusion